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ABSTRACT

The author examines how a simulation model relates to speech communication as an effective tool for high school and basic college speech courses. Pre-structured, teacher-structured, and spontaneous simulation games are discussed. The author concludes that regardless of which type of simulation strategy is employed, the post game discussion and analysis period among participants is critically important. This portion of the simulation teaching model provides students with opportunities to examine their behavior and further provides the greater impetus to student learning. (LG)

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APPROACHES TO THE USE OF SIMULATION IN SPEECH COURSES

Gary T. Hunt

Recent research has produced a number of new instructional strategies for use in the classroom. This article examines briefly one of these, simulation, for its appropriateness in high school and basic college speech communication classes. This examination is followed by a suggestion of three possible methods which might be used by the speech teacher to experiment with simulation in his courses.

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Recent changes in some high school and basic college speech classes have begun to move these courses away from their traditional public speaking orientation to an approach which emphasizes interpersonal communication.[1] High school and college speech courses now deal with such concepts as role anticipation and performance, self-perception, social alienation, interpersonal trust, and communication as dialogue.[2] But despite this interest in interpersonal communication, it would appear that the traditional teacher-lecture method of presenting material followed by instructor-mandated performance options is still the most widely used teaching strategy in high school and college speech courses.

Current education literature reports teaching success achieved through the use of a number of new instructional strategies.[3] Such techniques as programmed learning, teaching machines, computer assisted instruction, discovery learning, and simulation have proven to be of value to the teacher under certain learning conditions. But an examination of the literature related to speech communication reveals little in the way of research using these new strategies in teaching about our discipline. This paper will discuss one of these new teaching strategies, simulation, in terms of recent developments in the high school and basic college speech courses. First, a brief examination will be made of the nature

of simulation, especially as it relates to speech communication. This will be followed by a consideration of two evaluative questions dealing with the use of simulation in speech courses: "Can simulation be an effective tool for the speech communication teacher?" and "If so, which types of simulation would have the most appropriate application in teaching speech communication skills?"

Cruikshank has defined simulation as "the creation of realistic games to be played by participants in order to provide them with life-like problem solving experiences."[4] These games, varying much in content and structure, are to be played by students in the classroom. It is hoped that these simulations will help demonstrate to students a concept contained in the course curriculum. While some disciplines, especially social studies, have embraced simulation, only a few articles, dealing with the strategy, have appeared in the speech journals. Although there are a number of prepared simulation games which appear ideally suited for the teaching of speech communication skills, for example the recently published Nine Men Plus, it appears that widespread adoption of the technique has not occurred in our field.[5]

In seeking an answer to the first question proposed above, it would help to examine five postulates about simulation which appear continually in the literature.

1. Simulation provides for student practice in communication skills by creating a controlled atmosphere in which communication can occur.[6] The nature of simulation allows the student to practice the encoding and decoding of messages from a perspective different from his own. This role-taking component allows him to gain insights into complex human behavior. The content of the simulations provides the motivation for the role-players to communicate about the activity as it unfolds. If simulation does work as postulated, classroom communication should be improved as the technique is implemented.

(2) Simulation provides students with the opportunity to sharpen their problem-solving skills.[7] Classes in group discussion have been the primary laboratory for speech students to practice their skill in problem-solving. Unfortunately, the topics used in such classroom discussions often tend to be contrived to meet a special course requirement, discouraging serious ego-involved discussions. Simulation, on the other hand, is suppose to provide the content for real-life discussion, in theory maximizing student interest. Such ego-involved discussion activity encourages the student to practice such mental processes as compromise, arbitration, and conciliation in a controlled educational environment as he participates in simulation.

(3) Simulation creates more student interest in learning than is created by more traditional teaching strategies.[8] This was the major conclusion of Cherryholmes after an exhaustive review of the literature related to simulation. The activity of simulation creates an atmosphere which apparently interests students and encourages them to participate in class activities. By its nature as a self-contained entity, starting and concluding during a given class period, simulation often does not require much in the way of advanced preparation in order for the student to achieve classroom success.

(4) Simulation provides a physical as well as mental activity for students.[9] While most instructional strategies concentrate on mental processes, simulation allows the student to become physically involved in the activity. Certain types of simulation encourage the student to play a role physically, practicing the real life characteristics specified by that role. This combination of mental and physical activity could establish conditions under which a student can become totally engrossed in his educational experiences, learning as he participates.

(5) Simulation provides a laboratory situation where complex interpersonal behavior can be examined in some detail.[10] While many classroom teaching models may lack the needed application of

theoretical principles to real-life situations, in simulation students should be able to examine "real-life" behavior as it occurs in front of them. Various simulations can be repeatedly replayed until students are satisfied with a given role-played behavior. These replays give the student the opportunity to study complex human interaction under an educational microscope.

If all of these postulates are true, as the research suggests, their combined weight presents a powerful argument for the use of simulation in high school and college speech courses. The postulates suggests that the speech teacher has available to him a technique which may motivate students to become involved in their learning environment. Assuming the value of simulation as an aid in teaching speech skills, the second question, proposed above, dealing with the application of types of simulation for speech, will be now considered. There appears to be three basic approaches available to the teacher as he attempts to use simulation. These approaches represent different types of simulation strategies, each having its own value for achieving certain educational goals.

(1) Pre-structured Simulation Games. Since there are comprehensive lists and reviews of available simulation games elsewhere, this paper will not discuss these in any detail.[11] It is sufficient to say that pre-structured simulations are generally complex techniques which allow students to gain insights into particular problems areas in interpersonal relations. Among the concepts

covered by existing games which would appear germane to high school and basic college speech courses are democracy, propaganda, non-verbal communication, and free speech.[12] Such simulations often come with realistic and interesting rules for playing and winning.

(2) Teacher-structured Simulation Games. These simulations can be constructed by the teacher to help demonstrate various aspects of interpersonal communication. Many of the concepts discussed earlier in this paper (e.g., interpersonal trust, social alienation, and communication as dialogue) lend themselves to this particular type of simulation technique. For example, if a teacher wanted his students to gain certain specified skills in audience analysis he might structure a simulation game which would require students to "read" certain non-verbal cues given off by other players participating during a mock committee meeting. Certain players might be given instructions in one game to display specified kinds of non-verbal behavior. If the student is successful in "reading" cues, he wins the game. Hopefully, the student's skill in the audience analysis simulation will carry over when he takes part in other communication experiences. These teacher-structured simulations can be designed by the course instructor to meet specific classroom needs and these simulations are more adaptable and require less time than the pre-structured games.

(3) Spontaneous Simulation Games. This final type of simulation, although neglected in the literature, may be most fruitful in terms

of learning achieved by students. In the spontaneous simulation, the teacher is always alert to a student remark or an event taking place in the classroom which could spark a simulation. The teacher's request, "Let's act out that problem," may lead to a successful spontaneous simulation if he is careful about setting up the problem and instructing the players as to the components of their roles. If the teacher has the perceptual skills, spontaneous simulations can help create a powerful learning environment quickly by using a problem which has just evolved from the group. For example, a perceptive teacher overhears two students in a speech class discussing their respective fathers' methods of handling discipline. The teacher is quick to ask the two boys for their help in structuring a simulated family discussion about discipline with students playing the roles of father, mother, and children. If the simulation is successful those students in parental roles learn to become adept in drawing generalizations from a perspective different from their own. This process might allow him to increase his level of tolerance for different viewpoints.

Regardless of which type of simulation strategy the teacher might use, a post game discussion and analysis period among participants is critically important. Students gain insights by being able to discuss the activity after it has just occurred. Often the best classroom simulations are destroyed by a less than thorough post-activity analysis period. These discussions should allow students the opportunity to provide the reasons behind

certain kinds of behavior occurring in the simulation. This procedure provides opportunities for students to examine such behavior, gaining insights involving interpersonal relationships. This portion of the simulation teaching model provides the greatest impetus to student learning.

This paper has implied that simulation is one of a number of new educational strategies which might have application in speech communication. Certainly, it has not suggested that simulation is a panacea for all educational ills. The most appropriate use of this strategy, it was proposed, may well come in high school and basic college courses in communication.

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1 John Stewart, "An Interpersonal Approach to the Basic Course," The Speech Teacher, XXI (1972), 7.

2 For example, see the following: Thomas Burneau, "Utilizing Role-Playing in the Basic College Speech Course," The Speech Teacher, XX (1971), 53-58; Dale G. Leathers, "The Process Effects of Trust-Destroying Behavior in the Small Group," Speech Monographs, XXXVII (1970), 180-187; Kim Giffin, "Social Alienation by Communication Denial," Quarterly Journal of Speech, LVI (1970), 347-357.

3 For example, see the following: B.F. Skinner, "Reflections on a Decade of Teaching Machines," Teachers College Record, 65 (1963), 168-177; Ernst Z. Rothkopf, "Some Conjectures About Inspection Behavior in Learning from Written Sentences and the Response Mode Problem in Programmed Self-Instruction," Journal of Programmed Instruction, 2 (1963), 31-45; John Guthrie, "Expository Instruction Versus a Discovery Method," Journal of Educational Psychology, 58 (1967), 45-49.

4 D.R. Cruilshank, "Simulation: New Directions in Teacher Education," Phi Delta Kappan, XIVIII (1966), 23-24

5 William I. Gorden, Nine Men Plus (Dubuque, Iowa: Brown, 1971).

6 Sarane S. Boocock and E. O. Schild (editors), Simulation Games in Learning (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1968), p. iii.

7 Morton J. Sobel, "Sociodrama in the Classroom," Social Education, XVI (1952), 166-168.

8 Cleo H. Cherryholmes, "Some Current Research on Effectiveness of Educational Simulations: Implication for Alternative Strategies," American Behavioral Scientist, X (1966), 4-7.

9 An Inventory of Hunches About Simulation (La Jolla, California: Simile II, 1970).

10 Boocock and Schild, pp. iii-v.

11 For examples of Simulation games see: William I. Gorden, "Academic Games in the Speech Curriculum," Central States Speech Journal, XX (1969) 269-279. Also see Boocock and Schild.

12 For example, see the following: Robert Allen and Lorne Greene, Propaganda (New Haven: Wiff'n Poof, 1969); Democracy (Washington, D.C.: John Hopkins Games Center, 1968); Verdict II (Baltimore: Avolon-Hill,

1969); John D. Geardon, "War and Peace,"Social Education Journal IV (1966) 91-101; Negotiation-An Educational Negotiation Game (Columbus: Merrill, 1970); Body Talk (San Diego: Psychology Today, 1970).